

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDM #1187 3522026
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 182026Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4470
INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 7178
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5411
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0634
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3515
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0374
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0398
RUEAHL/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0594
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0319

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 001187

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA/ELA
PRM FOR LIZ HARRIS
DHS FOR SCIALABBA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/17/2017
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: MFA AGREES TO NEXT CIRCUIT RIDE; WILL CONSIDER
ADDITIONAL INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR IOM

REF: DAMASCUS 1083

Classified By: CDA Michael H. Corbin for reasons 1.5 b/d

¶1. (C) Summary. A Syrian MFA official confirmed UNHCR's report that the SARG would allow a DHS circuit ride in January as long as the same conditions set for the November-December circuit ride were met (reftel). The Charge asked that the SARG grant visas for international trainers and a deputy director for IOM Damascus to ensure all pending cases are prepared in time for the DHS interviews. The MFA official took note of the request and said he understood the point that this issue should be treated as part of the DHS circuit ride process. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On December 18, Charge met Husam ed-Din Al-Ala,a, Deputy FM Faisal Mikdad,s chef de cabinet, to press for early issuance of visas for the eight team members of the next DHS circuit ride and for the SARG to allow international staff to provide training and oversight at IOM in Damascus for the OPE resettlement program. The Charge emphasized that IOM needed a deputy director to supervise the preparation of files for the DHS circuit rides and international trainers to improve the skills of the Syrian staff if the OPE is to process the required number of cases in time for the next circuit ride.

¶3. (C) Ala,a confirmed what the MFA had informed UNHCR on December 17 that the SARG approved a January DHS circuit ride on the basis that the November/December circuit ride had been approved: UNHCR delivered to the MFA the results of the circuit ride that finished on December 13, to include the names and criteria for each approved case; the UNHCR would provide the cases with a brief synopsis of the refugee criteria for those to be interviewed by the next circuit ride; and that the UNHCR, rather than IOM, would be the venue for all interviews.

¶4. (C) Ala,a agreed to consider the request for international staff for IOM but asked that IOM communicate the specifics on international staff needed to the MFA via note verbale. Ala,a commented that quote making IOM again part of the issue would make it more difficult end quote. He

said that he wanted to keep to the DHS interview agreement reached after the visit to Syria by Ambassador Foley. Charge emphasized that the IOM support was part of the DHS process and that the U.S. had already compromised by agreeing to conduct the interviews at a different (and more complicated) location than had been used by previous circuit rides. Ala,a questioned the Charge closely on the details of the next circuit ride: dates, number of interviewers, number of cases to be processed, who would be preparing the cases, whether additional circuit rides would be needed beyond January. IOM has already passed information to UNHCR to allow UNHCR to fulfill the first commitment. IOM plans to present a list of TDY staffers needed to the MFA after the Eid holiday. Embassy will follow up.

CORBIN